

Science, CJS, Appropriations Act by the House of Representatives which severely handicap the efforts of those working to stop the flow of guns from reckless gun dealers into the hands of criminals. These amendments prohibit the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, ATF, from disclosing important information from the Firearms Trace System Database to local law enforcement and government officials unless it is connected to a "bona fide criminal investigation or prosecution" and prohibiting release for purposes of civil lawsuits.

According to published reports, these amendments have directly impacted a lawsuit by the city of New York against several gun manufacturers and distributors who it alleges have adopted sales and marketing practices which facilitate the transfer of guns to criminals. The city received ATF firearms trace data from 1998 to 2003 but has been unable to attain data from subsequent years because of the prohibition inserted in the law on its release for the purposes of civil lawsuits.

Legislation has recently been introduced in the House of Representatives which would make the restrictions on ATF firearms trace data permanent. On March 28, 2006, New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg testified before the House Judiciary Committee against this bill and said that it "would make it immeasurably harder to stop the flow of illegal guns to criminals, and depriv[e] local governments and their law enforcement agencies of the tools they need to hold dealers accountable. Specifically, these obstacles would take the form of severe restrictions on our use of ATF trace data, which is perhaps the most effective tool we have in combating illegal gun trafficking."

Mayor Bloomberg also expressed concern regarding provisions in the bill and current law which limit the ATF firearms trace data available to local law enforcement officials to data regarding the local geographic data. Mayor Bloomberg testified that 82 percent of the guns used in crimes in New York City were purchased outside of New York State. As Mayor Bloomberg pointed out in his testimony, restricting the access of law enforcement officials to firearms trace data from other jurisdictions severely limits their ability to take action against reckless gun dealers in other States.

I am hopeful the House of Representatives will defeat efforts to continue restrictions on law enforcement and local government officials' access to important ATF firearms trace data. In addition, I am hopeful that the Senate will take up and pass legislation introduced last week by Senator MENENDEZ to repeal restrictions in current law. ATF firearms trace data related to reckless gun dealers should be made easily available to those who have a responsibility to protect our families and communities from the threat of gun violence.

NATIONAL AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, I rise today to commemorate National Autism Awareness Month and to urge my fellow Senators to continue to back efforts to fight this disorder and support the families affected by it.

Autism is a complex developmental disability that is the result of a neurological disorder that affects the normal functions and development of the brain, which affects social and communication skills. Autism is a spectrum disorder, making early diagnosis crucial to minimize the symptoms through specialized intervention programs.

Autism and its associated behaviors have been estimated to occur in as many as 2 to 6 in every 1,000 individuals. As many as 1.5 million Americans today are believed to have some form of autism. The Department of Education indicates that autism is growing at a rate of 10 to 17 percent per year. At these rates, the prevalence of autism could reach 4 million Americans in the next decade.

The prevalence of autism has increased astronomically in the past decade, and in certain areas of New Jersey, the rates are higher still. We know far too little about this disorder, and the work of the Centers for Disease Control, CDC, and the National Institutes of Health, NIH, is vital to our efforts to learn more about the nature and incidence of autism.

I am a proud cosponsor of S. 843, the Combating Autism Act of 2005, which authorizes \$860 million over 5 years to combat autism through research, screening, intervention, and education. I urge my fellow Senators to support the passage of this bill so that we can continue efforts to eliminate autism.

Congress approved the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, IDEA, in 1975, requiring States to provide an appropriate education to students with special needs. While it committed to providing 40 percent of the additional costs for educating such students, today the Federal Government funds only 17.8 percent of the cost. In the fiscal year 2006 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education appropriations bill, the Federal Government cut back on its share of the cost of providing special education. This leaves State governments and local school districts to choose between paying the extra cost or cutting programs. It is vital that Congress fund IDEA at the fully authorized level. I urge my fellow Senators to support IDEA and pass S. 2185, the IDEA Full Funding Act.

Congress must remain committed to supporting efforts by medical researchers, doctors, schools, State and local governments, and families to learn more about autism and to treat it. This disorder affects too many already. We must do what we can to eliminate future cases while we treat people who currently have autism. I hope we can all join together in this important

fight and recognize the importance of National Autism Awareness Month.

BOB NEWHART

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, recently The New York Times ran another profile of Bob Newhart. I say "another" because it is one of so many glowing articles written about him over the years.

Marcelle and I are fortunate to know Bob and his wife Virginia, known by everyone as Ginnie. Bob is a wonderful family person who enjoys being with his wife, children, and grandchildren, but still has time to bring joy to everyone who comes in contact with him. As many times as I have heard some of his comedy routines, I still find myself convulsed in laughter, though nothing can equal the quiet times Marcelle and I have been able to spend with the Newharts.

Bob is extraordinarily well read and well informed and brings a wry and insightful view to whatever is happening. I can think of no one who is his equal, and I ask unanimous consent that this article be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From The New York Times, Mar. 25, 2006]
THE BUTTON-DOWN COMIC, STILL STANDING UP
AT 76

(By Ben Sisario)

LOS ANGELES, MARCH 24: Hidden behind a wide black gate, with a fountain in front and a big pool in back that the grandchildren love to dive into, and with the bookcases inside cluttered with the likes of David McCulloch and Joseph J. Ellis, Bob Newhart's house in Bel Air would seem a perfectly comfortable spot for a man of 76 to cocoon and write his memoirs.

But a comedian craves the sound of laughter, and Mr. Newhart, though happily deep into his golf-playing years, cannot stay away from the stand-up circuit. He does about 30 dates a year, mostly on short weekend trips. (He will perform tonight at the Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts.)

"I can't imagine not doing it," he said, sitting on an overstuffed sofa in his living room, in crisp gray slacks and a fuzzy blue sweater, with his narrow reading glasses resting at a steep angle almost at the tip of his nose. "It's something I've done for 46 years, and at 5 o'clock I'll start pacing up and down to get the adrenaline going. It's like Russian roulette—you're out there and it's working and you're saying, 'Thank God the bullet's not in the chamber.'"

Mr. Newhart built his career on a persona that would avoid tension and thrills at all cost. He emerged in the early 1960's as a former accountant and copywriter who acted out the mundane and ridiculous details of great moments in history through brilliantly minimalistic one-sided telephone calls, like a gigglingly skeptical Englishman talking to Sir Walter Raleigh about his discovery of tobacco. ("You take a pinch of tobacco and you stuff it up your nose and it makes you sneeze? Yeah, I imagine it would. Wait!") And on two long-running sitcoms, he played versions of the same character, a slightly grouchy pragmatist always just a breath away from losing his cool over the neurotic foibles of his supporting cast.

"The Bob Newhart Show" ran from 1972 to 1978 and is now finding a second life on DVD; its third season is being reissued April 11.

And since his second sitcom, "Newhart," ended in 1990 after eight seasons, Mr. Newhart has lent his almost-unflappable deadpan to a handful of films and television shows, most recently "ER" and "Desperate Housewives." But his favorite activity remains simply standing in front of a crowd with a microphone.

"I'm proudest of being a stand-up," he explained, "because it's harder. The degree of difficulty is 3.85 instead of 3.5."

It was also his baptism. Sitting in his spacious living room, dressed like the frumpy innkeeper of "Newhart" and speaking with a strategic stammer that sets up every punch line, he is comfortably recognizable as one of his television characters. His naturalistic technique of relying on his own personality to fill out his characters, he said, is a skill he picked up early in his stand-up career.

"You start out doing somebody else," he said. "I'd watch the Sullivan show and I'd watch the Paar show, and a comedian would be on, and I'd be laughing but at the same time analyzing him. When I started, I was doing all the good comedians I'd ever seen. Then I developed my own voice. My routines are my natural way of looking at the world."

Mr. Newhart discusses his performance like a serious method actor. He said: "With the stand-up comic on TV, whether it's Seinfeld or Cosby or Roseanne, more important than their knowledge of how to tell a joke is their knowledge of themselves, or the persona they've created as themselves. So that when you're in a room with writers you can say, 'Guys, that's a funny line but I wouldn't say it.'"

As a stand-up, he draws from a lifetime of routines, and for his oldest fans he always includes a few numbers from his first albums, like the conversation between Abraham Lincoln and his public relations man, who urges him not to shave his beard because it plays so well in focus groups. Reading recently about the Zacarias Moussaoui trial, his "button-down mind" found an angle on the 9/11 pilots, and he has been toying with it as a possible stand-up bit.

"They didn't want to learn to take off and land," he said. "They just wanted to fly. Some have criticized the F.B.I. because that should have been a red flag. But I saw it as a case of—" he studied his coffee table it as if it were a weekly planner—"O.K., well, I don't have to come in Monday; I can come in late Tuesday; Wednesday and Thursday, O.K., that's flying; and then I don't have to come in Friday."

His understated style has been widely influential, often in surprising ways. One of his biggest fans is Bernie Mac, who says he is but one of a generation of black comedians who were inspired by Mr. Newhart.

"A lot of people define courage as being out front and in your face," Mr. Mac said, "but Bob didn't come out of his picture frame for anybody. That bland style, that plaid jacket, with the hair combed to one side over the bald spot—that was Bob. And there's nothing wrong with that. Because it takes courage to be yourself, and he showed everybody that."

Working on his memoir, to be published in the fall by Hyperion, Mr. Newhart was reminded of the time he was on David Susskind's talk show with a panel of comedians, including Buddy Hackett and Alan King, and Mr. Susskind asked him about his background.

"You went to college?" he asked," Mr. Newhart said. "And I said, 'Yes, I went to Loyola University and I got a degree in accounting.' And Buddy said—" here Mr. Newhart did a remarkable imitation of Mr. Hackett's voice—" 'You mean you didn't have to do this?'"

"And now I can say, 'No, Buddy, I had to do this.'"

(At the request of Mr. REID, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

HONORING BRAVO COMPANY OF WEIRTON, WEST VIRGINIA

• Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, today it is my great honor to commend the soldiers of Bravo Company of the 463rd Engineering Battalion, Army Reserve Unit of Weirton, WV, as they return home. Selflessly leaving their families and communities behind during an 11-month deployment in Iraq, the 463rd served as a model of courage throughout their tour of duty.

In October 2004, more than 140 men and women of Bravo Company answered the call to service—leaving for training at Fort Bragg and in Kuwait. In doing so, they joined generations of West Virginians who have served our Nation in times of war, unselfishly putting themselves in harm's way to defend our country and protect the freedom of all Americans. I am not surprised by their actions—West Virginians, and our neighbors throughout the Ohio Valley, have always been among the first to respond to their country's call to service—but I am nevertheless grateful for their service and commitment. Thanks to the 463rd and so many other West Virginia men and women who have fought in Iraq and Afghanistan, I am proud to say that West Virginia's long tradition of patriotism is very much alive and well.

On Christmas Eve 2004, Bravo Company entered Iraq to begin its mission of rebuilding the war-torn country. Bravo Company provided engineering support for our troops, upgraded an Iraqi Air Force base, repaired a damaged bridge on the Tigris River needed for troop movements, and provided infrastructure for refueling the airplanes that provided such critical support in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Through their determined efforts, these individuals secured the safety of their fellow American men and women in uniform, simultaneously serving as the embodiment of American commitment to the people of Iraq. For that, they deserve our sincere gratitude and deepest respect.

Tragically, Bravo Company's mission was not completed without loss. On August 21, 2004, the life of Sgt. Joseph Nurre, a 22-year-old native of Wilton, CA was claimed by a roadside bomb near Samarra, Iraq. His fellow soldiers described him as an intensely dedicated soldier and a warm, engaging friend. As Bravo Company returns home, Sergeant Nurre and his family remain in our thoughts and prayers.

To all the men and women of Bravo Company, 463rd Engineering Battalion, I thank you for your service, patriotism, and commitment to our country and its defense. Your bravery and selfless sacrifice have earned you the admiration and respect of West Virginians and our Nation. God bless you all, and welcome home.●

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

25 YEARS DEFENDING DIGNITY AND WORTH

• Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, 25 years ago, a community in my State found itself with some new unwelcome neighbors. North Idaho made dismaying national headlines as "Hate's New Home." These headlines were a terrible distortion of the truth; the neo-Nazi organization that moved its headquarters to Hayden represented only a tiny fraction of the people who called Idaho home. Still, the damage was done, and people were left with the dreadful and mistaken impression that Idahoans were intolerant, prejudiced and hateful. And to make matters worse, like a malignant growth, some who did embrace doctrines of intolerance and bigotry were drawn to the area.

It is at crisis points that we define ourselves as either cowards or people of honor. The citizens of Kootenai County had a choice to make, and they chose to be people of honor. The Kootenai County Task Force on Human Relations was founded, giving that region a chance to speak out against human rights violations and prejudice. When the Aryan Nation decided to march down Main Street in Coeur d'Alene, rather than return hatred for hatred, businesses simply closed, giving the marchers no audience for their message of intolerance. Last year, the residents of Hayden exercised perhaps the most powerful right granted us as American citizens—our vote—sending a clear message that a leadership of hatred was absolutely unacceptable. And what didn't make the national press in recent years is the fact that according to the Southern Poverty Law Center, as of 2000, Idaho had 70 human rights groups, or one for every 18,500 people. To put this in perspective, at that time, California had one for every 358,000 people and New York had one for every 167,000 people. Now that is worthy of headlines, as far as I am concerned.

In cooperation with the task force and with a vision of established, ongoing education and leadership in human rights, the generous support of the Greg C. Carr Foundation, and dedicated leadership of Human Rights Education Institute board of directors, the Human Rights Education Institute was established, opening its doors in December 2005.

North Idaho was unexpectedly presented with a choice 25 years ago. Its citizens have not only responded with honor and justice, they, in the words of a former task force leader, "made lemonade out of lemons." I commend my fellow Idahoans on their vision for dignity and worth for all people. I applaud their staunch commitment to uphold our Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and our Bill of Rights which ensure equality for all under the law.●